

1.2 SETTING OBJECTIVES

BACKGROUND

Developing objectives is integral to managing forest land.

Your objectives should be driven by the reasons you own your land. (Often we use the words “goals,” “objectives,” and “goals and objectives” interchangeably. In this manual, we mostly use the term “objectives.”) The duration of most plans is 10 years, short when compared with the life of the forest. When setting your objectives think big and long term. List all your hopes and dreams for your property. Thinking long term will help you develop short-term objectives that ensure you reach your long-term goals. Talking with UNH Cooperative Extension county foresters, other foresters, loggers, family, neighbors, and friends can help you develop your objectives.

Your objectives for the current and future use of your property should be specific. You will use your objectives to formulate recommendations that then become a course of action to accomplish these objectives. The more specific and measurable your objectives, the easier to monitor and track whether you are achieving them.

Clear objectives help you decide what actions to take and what actions to avoid. Often landowners tell foresters, “I want to do what is right for the land and make a little money.” Foresters manage land based on a landowner’s objectives. Without your specific instructions, the forester (or logger) can only make decisions based on their ideas of “what is good for the land,” which may not align with your intentions. Consider your wishes for the use of your land before talking with a forester. Be prepared to adapt or revise your objectives as you learn more about your land from your research and from working with your forester.

Setting objectives will help you:

- Invest your time, energy, and financial resources wisely.
- Communicate effectively with professionals who may help you achieve your objectives.
- Avoid undesired changes on your property.
- Think long term about your property and its resources.
- Avoid doing something that may not be in your best interest or in the best interests of your land

Consider and write down the answers to the following questions to help you develop objectives and priorities:

General

- Why do you own your property?
- How long do you expect to own your property?
- How would you like it to be used or managed when you no longer own it?
- How do you currently use your land?
- Do you want to use it differently in the future?
- What is most important to you about your land?
- Are you enrolled in, or interested in current use taxation, Tree Farm, or a financial assistance program through the Natural Resources Conservation Service? Would you like to learn more about these and other programs?

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Your interest and ability to work on the land

- Are you interested in working on your own land (pruning, clearing trails or vistas, cutting firewood, tapping sugar maples for syrup, etc.)? If so, how much time can you devote, and what skills do you have or are interested in developing?
- Do you have hand tools or power equipment such as a bow saw, pole saw, loppers, chainsaw, or tractor, etc?

Property Condition

- Are there any insect or disease problems?
- Have any natural disturbances such as ice storms, wind, fire, or flood affected your land?
- Are there special places on your property? A place may be special for sentimental reasons or because of an unusual geological formation, significant wildlife habitat, and many other reasons.
- Are there plants or a particular tree or group of trees you want to protect?

Timber

- Do you want to improve the health or economic value of the forest?
- Are you interested in managing for income from wood products?
- Do you have specific goals for the amount or timing of income?
- Are you willing to cut trees to enhance the timber, aesthetic, recreational, wildlife, or other nontimber resources?
- Do some aspects about timber harvesting concern you?

Aesthetics

- Do you want to maintain views to or from the property?
- Do you want to open up a view?
- If your property has road frontage or other areas viewed by the public, how important is maintaining the appearance to you?

Recreation

- Do you or others walk, hike, camp, fish, hunt, snowmobile, bird watch, swim, bike, ski, snowshoe, or enjoy your land in other ways?
- Do you want to enhance the ability to enjoy these or other activities?
- Would you like to improve the existing trails and roads?
- Do you want to prohibit any activities?

Water and Soil

- Do you want to give special attention to vernal pools, bogs, swamps, seeps, small streams, and wet areas?

Wildlife

- Do you know what wildlife use your property?
- Do you want to enhance the habitat for any of these species?
- Would you like to encourage a broader variety of wildlife by improving habitat for species not currently present?

Diversity

- Do you want to encourage a broad variety of plants and animals?
- Do you want to protect unusual plants and animals?
- Do you want to discourage invasive non-native species?

Cultural Resources

- Do you want to protect cultural features such as stone walls, foundations, cellar holes, or wells?

Other Nontimber Uses

- Do you harvest maple syrup, Christmas trees or other nontimber forest products? Do you want to?
- Are you interested in growing and harvesting non-traditional products such as mushrooms, herbs, and greens?
- Are you interested in using your property for educating others about forests?

OBJECTIVE

Develop objectives to guide management plans and activities.

CONSIDERATIONS

- UNH Cooperative Extension has forms to help you think through and write down your objectives.
- Your objectives might change as you learn more through personal exploration and interaction with professionals, as the land changes, or if your situation changes. Objectives often become more detailed and specific as you learn about your land.
- Your property is part of the larger landscape. Your goals and the opportunity to achieve them may be affected by the characteristics of the surrounding land. Conversely, your actions can affect conditions on nearby lands. Adopting the landscape perspective is especially important when considering wildlife habitat. Different wildlife species need different forest types and ages to meet their needs. Most birds and animals require distinct habitats during different parts of the year or during various stages in their lives. Not all forest landowners own enough acres to meet all the habitat needs of many wildlife species. The benefits of managing for wildlife on smaller tracts may only be realized if this management complements conditions and management on neighboring properties.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- ✓ Determine your objectives and write them down.
- ✓ Involve family members in discussions about your land so they understand your goals and objectives, especially if you plan to leave your land to them.
- ✓ Discuss your objectives with your forester and revise them as you learn more about your land, or if your situation changes. Include written objectives as part of your forest management plan.
- ✓ When wildlife habitat management is an objective, examine your land within its larger context to determine the habitat management that may be effective and reasonable to pursue within your woodlot.
- ✓ Refer to the appropriate chapters in this manual to learn more about the resources that interest you.

CROSS REFERENCES

1.3 Forest Management Planning; 1.4 Estate Planning and Land Protection; Chapters related to individual landowner objectives.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

UNH Cooperative Extension. *Landowner Goals and Objective Assessment Forms*. http://extension.unh.edu/resources/resource/972/Landowner_Goal_Assessment Accessed on January 28, 2010.